

# COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
January 28, 2016

## AT RISK: BAY AREA GREENBELT, 2016 EDITION

Project No. 11-048-02  
Project Manager: Matt Gerhart

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$40,000 to Greenbelt Alliance to produce the 2016 edition of *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt*, which will map risks to open space in the San Francisco Bay area, evaluate policy measures to conserve open space, and evaluate other values of these lands.

**LOCATION:** San Francisco Bay Area

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

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### EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Example, At Risk:2012 Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Letters](#)

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### RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31160-31165 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) to Greenbelt Alliance to produce the 2016 edition of *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt*, including mapping risks to open space in the San Francisco Bay area, as well as evaluation of the value of these lands and existing land use measures to conserve them. Prior to the commencement of work and the disbursement of funds, Greenbelt Alliance shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a detailed work program, Conservancy acknowledgment plan, schedule and budget, and the names and qualifications of any contractors to be employed in carrying out the project.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.

2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31160-31165), regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
  3. Greenbelt Alliance is a nonprofit organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the California Public Resources Code.”
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### PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends authorization to disburse up to \$40,000 to Greenbelt Alliance to produce the 2016 edition of *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt*, and to incorporate it into its interactive, online map of the San Francisco Bay Area open space lands. Since 1989, Greenbelt Alliance has produced *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt*, providing a snapshot of the greenbelt lands - working farms and natural areas - facing development pressure in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. The report measures the imminence of development on individual open space areas. Maps show high-risk open space areas likely to be developed within 10 years, medium risk in 30 years, and low risk for unprotected open space lands unlikely to be developed within a 30 year time horizon. The report presents this information in a clear, simple format and is used by conservationists and elected officials throughout the region. Conservancy staff has utilized the report and map of at-risk lands in our planning processes.

The 2016 update will ensure that Bay Area land managers and decision-makers are using the most up-to-date information to inform their conservation planning and investments. The ultimate outcome of the project will be increased protection of greenbelt lands through acquisition, easements, and policy. This increased greenbelt protection will bring many associated benefits, including additional recreational opportunities, more local food available from Bay Area agricultural lands, and increased climate resilience from lands that protect against flooding and filter and store fresh water.

The goals and objectives for the 2016 edition of *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt* are as follows:

**Objective 1: Complete threat/policy protection assessment.** As of November 2015, Greenbelt Alliance has updated its analytical methodology for assessing development threat and policy protection to more accurately assess potential parcelization and development density. They have used data from Santa Clara County to compare this new approach to the methodology used in the 2012 *At Risk* assessment. The proposed project would collect data on development threat factors and policy protections for the remaining Bay Area counties and run analyses for the each county. Results will be vetted through two rounds of stakeholder meetings, with subsequent revision after each meeting based on that feedback.

**Objective 2: Complete summary of benefits provided by Bay Area open space.** As with the 2012 edition of *At Risk*, Greenbelt Alliance will compile the most recently available information on the values of Bay Area open space (e.g. wildlife habitat, water resources, recreational areas, and important farm and ranch lands). For the first time, this edition of *At Risk* will also compile findings of recent studies on the economic benefits of open space. The report will summarize

both types of benefits using easy-to-understand measures such as acres providing individual benefits, acres providing multiple benefits, and dollars contributed to the Bay Area economy.

**Objective 3: Produce and distribute *At Risk* report.** The *At Risk* report will be written and designed with an eye toward providing local and regional conservation and development decision makers with useful and easy to access information. Targeted outreach plans will ensure the information gets to these target audiences, and assess any additional products needed beyond the full written report to ensure those audiences are able to use *At Risk* as a decision-making tool.

**Objective 4: Ensure *At Risk* data is readily accessible to key user groups online.** Because so much of the value of *At Risk* comes from the underlying technical data, it is essential that the *At Risk* data be available online in a format that is easily used by key target audiences (e.g. land managers and land-use planners). Outreach to key audience members will allow Greenbelt Alliance to integrate the *At Risk* data into the online platforms and formats deemed most effective.

**Objective 5: Ensure that target audiences are able to use *At Risk* as a decision support tool.** *At Risk* will only contribute to greenbelt conservation if stakeholders are aware that *At Risk* is available to them and are able to effectively use it to inform their conservation, land-use and investment decisions. Greenbelt Alliance will promote and manage sharing of the *At Risk* analysis and data, providing moderate-level technical assistance to key users. This would take the form of direct outreach to strategic conservation planning processes, such as helping open space districts analyze which lands with important habitat value are at high risk for sprawl development to inform their acquisition priorities, or helping local governments determine which lands have multiple values and should be prioritized for protection under new policies.

The work by Greenbelt Alliance to identify open space lands at-risk of development, to map policy protection measures, to map the values of open space lands, and to make this easily accessible augments the Conservation Land Network developed by the Bay Area Open Space Council and will be of benefit to Conservancy staff during program planning and project development.

In 1958, Dorothy Erskine, Jack Kent and colleagues founded Citizens for Regional Recreation and Parks, an organization of environmentally concerned individuals and groups created to protect parks and recreational areas in the Bay Area. In 1969, the organization was renamed People for Open Space to reflect the group's new commitment to preserving additional spaces such as ranch lands, agricultural lands, and wildlife preserves. In 1987, People for Open Space became Greenbelt Alliance: with a focus on grassroots activism and policy research and a goal of establishing a permanent regional greenbelt. Greenbelt Alliance has been successful in securing dozens of urban growth boundaries in the nine-county region and remains instrumental in preserving open space and protecting the quality of life in the Bay Area. Greenbelt Alliance served as the fiscal sponsor for the Bay Area Open Space Council for nearly 20 years and managed five grants from the Conservancy for the Council.

**Project History:** Greenbelt Alliance has produced *At Risk: the Bay Area Greenbelt* roughly every five years since 1989. The Conservancy previously provided \$50,000 to fund the 2012 edition. Conservancy participation was based upon Conservancy involvement in the Upland Habitat Goals effort, which resulted in a Conservation Lands Network for the nine-county San

San Francisco Bay Area. Since that time, *At Risk* has become part of a robust portfolio of conservation research that documents the state of the Bay Area's greenbelt. This research, much of which was supported by the Coastal Conservancy, includes updates to the Conservation Lands Network, the Bay Area Critical Habitat Linkages report, Golden Lands, Golden Opportunity, the Healthy Lands, Healthy Economies Initiative, and various Habitat Conservation Plans and Natural Community Conservation Plans throughout the region.

## PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$40,000
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation	<u>189,498</u>
<b>Total Project Costs</b>	<b>\$229,498</b>

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is the fiscal year 2010/11 appropriation of the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84) (Public Resources Code sections 75001 *et seq.*) for the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. Under section 75060, these funds may be used for the protection of bays and coastal waters and watersheds, pursuant to the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. Consistent with Section 75060, the proposed authorization is to be used to plan for and assist projects intended to protect the natural habitat values of the San Francisco Bay and its watershed and is undertaken pursuant to the Conservancy's enabling legislation, as discussed below. A portion of Proposition 84 funds may also be used for broad-based planning "necessary for the successful design, selection, and implementation of the projects authorized under" Proposition 84 (see § 75072).

## CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This project is undertaken in accordance with Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31165, regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.

Under Section 31162, the Conservancy may award grants within the Bay Area that achieve the following goals: (a) improve public access to, within and around the San Francisco Bay, coast, ridgetops, and urban open spaces; (b) protect natural habitats and connecting corridors; (c) assist in the implementation of the adopted plans of local governments and districts; and (d) promote and assist projects that will provide open space and natural areas accessible to urban populations for recreational and educational purposes. The proposed authorization will provide funding for a mapping effort that will assist resource and recreation managers in the planning and implementation of projects within the Bay Area that achieve exactly these objectives.

Section 31163(a) directs the Conservancy to cooperate with local and regional government bodies, non-profit organizations, and other interested parties in identifying and adopting long-term resource and recreational goals for the San Francisco Bay Area. The 2016 edition of *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt* will enhance the ability of Bay Program staff to plan and implement projects in cooperation with other organizations.

This project is appropriate for prioritization under the selection criteria set forth in Section 31163(c) in that: (1) it is supported by a great number of local and regional plans, including the San Francisco Bay Plan, that call for coordinated action to protect open space, agricultural, and recreational opportunities for local and regional use; (2) it serves a regional constituency – the nine-county Bay Area; (3) it can be implemented in a timely way because funding and staff are already in place; (4) it will generate information that can be used to protect resource and recreational areas that could be lost; and (5) it includes significant matching funds.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN  
GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S), AS REVISED JUNE 25, 2015:**

Consistent with **Goal 10, Objective 10A** of the Conservancy's 2013 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will help the Conservancy identify and prioritize resource and recreational goals, including projects that protect and enhance natural habitats and other open-space lands of regional significance.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S  
PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on October 2, 2014, in the following respects:

**Required Criteria**

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Promotion and implementation of state plans and policies:** The proposed project will implement the following state and regional plans:
  - a. *California @ 50 Million: The Environmental Goals and Policy Report* (Governor's Office of Planning and Research, Draft 2013). Goal 1 furthered by the project: *Preserve and Steward State Lands and Natural Resources* and 2: *Build Sustainable Regions that Support Healthy, Livable Communities*.
  - b. *California Water Action Plan* (California Natural Resources Agency, 2014). Goal furthered by the project: Prioritize protection of key habitat linkages, sensitive habitats, and specialized habitats.
  - c. *California Essential Habitat Connectivity Strategy for Conserving a Connected California* (2010). Goal furthered by the project: Protect large remaining blocks of intact habitat or natural landscape and model linkages between them that need to be maintained, particularly as corridors for wildlife.

- d. *San Francisco Bay Area Upland Habitat Goals/ Conservation Lands Network* (Bay Area Open Space Council, 2011). The project will advance the conservation of essential and important areas to the protection of biodiversity in the region.
  - e. *Habitat Conservation Plans/Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs/HCPs)*: The project furthers the goals of HCPs/NCCPs throughout the Bay Area by helping to protect the region's most important habitat areas.
- 4. **Support of the public:** Letters of support are included as Exhibit 2.
  - 5. **Location:** The proposed project addresses land conservation values and risk factors in the entire nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.
  - 6. **Need:** Without Conservancy Funding, Greenbelt Alliance will not have sufficient funds to complete the 2016 edition of *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt*.
  - 7. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project is regional in scope, addressing values and risk factors facing open space throughout the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.
  - 8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** This project will focus on the open spaces in the San Francisco Bay Area, which includes land that may be vulnerable to sea level rise. Although the project will not directly address sea level rise, to the extent it promotes conservation of low-lying areas, it will help to alleviate problems associated with sea level rise.

#### **Additional Criteria**

- 9. **Urgency:** This project is intended to convey the urgency of protecting natural resource and recreational lands in the San Francisco Bay Area that are most at-risk of being lost. Conservancy funding is necessary to undertake the project.
- 10. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
- 11. **Innovation:** For the first time, the results of Greenbelt Alliance's at-risk analysis will be presented in an interactive online map. This will give users the opportunity to customize the display to show layers they are most interested in and the ability to select a geographic area and get detailed information about the risk factors, policy protections, and open space values present in that area.
- 12. **Readiness:** Greenbelt Alliance is ready to start work on this project.
- 13. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See "Project History" above.
- 14. **Return to Conservancy:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
- 15. **Cooperation:** Greenbelt Alliance will collect information from multiple sources and vet results with many organizations, working in collaboration with others to develop and produce the 2016 edition of *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt*.
- 16. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** Development of information and strategies that protect open lands and reduce sprawl development contribute to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from transportation, energy use, and conversion of natural and agricultural lands.

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

Under California Code of Regulations Title 14, Section 15262, feasibility and planning activities are statutorily exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review. All of the activities that would be undertaken for this project are properly characterized as feasibility and planning. Upon authorization, staff will file a Notice of Exemption.